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ABSTRACT

A study was done of student teachers and cooperating teachers' assessment of the student teachers' performance in order to investigate how their relationship was affected by these perceptions. A survey instrument in two versions, one for student teachers and one for cooperating teachers, was devised listing 54 specific student teacher performance items stated in corresponding terms. These were administered to 200 Middle Tennessee State University students and their 200 cooperating teachers twice, in the third week of the student teaching semester and in the ninth week. There were statistically significant differences between cooperating teachers and student teachers on 23 survey items. However, most of the statistically significant differences in the first survey administration revealed a low potential for conflict. On all of the items that emerged in the third week of student teaching but disappeared by the ninth week, and on most of the items that emerged in the third week and continued into the ninth week, the cooperating teachers had a more favorable attitude about performance than did the student teachers themselves. Only differences that emerged for the first time at the end of the semester posed a threat to the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship. Includes six tables. (JB)

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Differences between Cooperating Teachers and Student Teachers in Their Assessment of Student Teacher Performance: Potential Threats to a Successful Relationship

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Differences between Cooperating Teachers and Student Teachers in Their Assessment of Student Teacher Performance: Potential Threats to a Successful Relationship

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Introduction

Research on expert-novice differences indicates that beginning and experienced teachers differ in the way they interpret classroom events, in their use of routines, and in their emotional investment in teaching (Berliner, 1986). Beginning teachers think differently from experienced teachers in the way they view instruction, content, and students (Leinhardt & Greeno, 1986, Housner & Griffey, 1985).

It is reasonable to assume that these research findings about novice teachers and experienced teachers should also be true of student teachers and the experienced cooperating teachers they work with during their professional semester. Parkay (1988) suggests that similarities between mentor and protege teachers have a positive impact on the success of their relationship. If so, then, insofar as they might be a source of conflict between the cooperating teacher and the student teacher, expert/novice differences could pose potential threats to the establishment and maintenance of a successful relationship between them.

A further factor that can impact the cooperating teacher/student teacher relationship involves the changes that beginning teachers undergo as they gain

teaching experience. Fuller (1969) and others (Adams & Martray, 1981, Campbell & Wheatley, 1983) found that beginners go through stages of concern that originate with self-oriented preoccupations (the self stage) and proceed through concerns about how to conduct the tasks that surround teaching (the task stage). Experienced teachers attain the third stage, in which their primary concern is the impact their teaching has upon student learning. These stages affect all aspects of teaching: teachers' instruction in the classroom, their ability to plan instruction, and their behavior as professionals.

It is suggested here that the stages postulated by Fuller apply also to student teachers and that, therefore, student teachers' concerns, abilities, and behaviors may change over the course of the student teaching semester.

Do the novice-expert differences described in the literature occur between cooperating teachers and student teachers during the student teaching semester? If so, such differences could pose threats to the relationship between cooperating teachers and student teachers, by serving as a source of conflict. Do these differences, if they exist, change as student teachers gain experience and progress over the course of the semester? If so, the nature of the threats to their successful relationship with their cooperating teachers would change over the course of the student teaching semester.

Methodology

A survey instrument in two versions, one for student teachers and one for cooperating teachers, was devised, listing 54 specific student teacher performance items stated in corresponding terms. That is, the student teacher form was worded

in terms of "I am thorough in preparation for instruction" and the cooperating teacher form used the words "The student teacher is thorough in preparation for instruction." The instruments used a Likert-type scale, in which 1=Strongly Agree and 5=Strongly Disagree. Appendix A provides a copy of the survey instrument distributed to cooperating teachers.

The specific performance items on the instruments were derived from several sources: (a) the differences cited in the expert-novice literature, (b) written diaries of student teachers and cooperating teachers collected the prior semester, in which all parties were asked to comment on important areas of student teacher performance, and (c) the experience of the researcher in supervising student teachers, recollecting conversations with cooperating teachers about important areas of student teacher performance.

The instruments were administered twice during the student teaching semester. The first administration was conducted at the end of the third week of student teaching, when student teachers were still new to the teaching act but had done enough teaching that their cooperating teachers had been able to observe them. The second administration was conducted at the end of the ninth week of student teaching. In MTSU's ten-week program, the ninth week was the last week of full-time teaching for the student teachers.

Instruments were distributed to the total population of the 200 student teachers and the 200 cooperating teachers involved in one semester of student teaching.

Analysis of variance was used to compare the mean responses on each survey

item between the student teachers and the cooperating teachers for each survey administration. Differences significant at the .05 level of confidence were reported.

Statistically significant differences between student teachers and cooperating teachers were found on 23 of the student teacher performance items (see Table 1 for the content of the items and Tables 2 and 3 for the confidence levels). These differences were analyzed in three categories:

(1) On nine of the items, differences were evidenced in the third week only and disappeared by the ninth week.

(2) On seven of the items, differences were evidenced in the third week and continued into the ninth week.

(3) On seven of the items, differences were not evidenced until the ninth week.

Findings

There were statistically significant differences between cooperating teachers and student teachers in their perceptions of student teachers' performance on 23 survey items. How might these differences affect the cooperating teacher/student teacher relationship? Before examining the differences specifically, it is important to note that the *direction* of the differences must be considered. One might expect the differences between them to be a source of conflict when the cooperating teacher's perception of the student teacher's performance is less favorable than the student teacher's perception of his/her own performance. In such case, the cooperating teacher would be more likely to feel some dissatisfaction that the student teacher is not recognizing the need to perform better. On the other hand,

one would expect conflict to be a less likely result of the differences when the cooperating teacher has a more favorable perception of performance than the student teacher has himself or herself. In this case, the cooperating teacher would feel more satisfied than the student teacher that the job is being done well.

Therefore, in examining the statistically significant differences between the two groups, one must not only examine the specific items on which differences are evidenced. One must also note whether on those items the cooperating teachers have a more favorable perception or a less favorable perception than the student teachers. Where cooperating teachers feel more favorably than student teachers, it is less possible that the differences between them will cause conflict. Where cooperating teachers feel less favorable about performance than student teachers, one might observe some kind of rift developing between them as a result of the differences.

A caution is in order here. It must be noted that, although the differences evidenced in this study are statistically significant, in no case do these data indicate a major chasm between cooperating teachers and student teachers. For example, on survey item 51 in Table 4, the data indicate a student teacher mean of 2.45 and a cooperating teacher mean of 2.22, revealing that both groups were moderately satisfied that the "student teacher can manage several tasks simultaneously while he/she is teaching." One might conclude only that there is the *potential* for problems in the relationship, and if a difficulty does arise the data might help to explain one of its sources. In other words, the differences that are revealed in the study do not predict conflict; they may only help to explain it if it occurs.

The following is an examination of the results of the study in greater detail.

Week 3 Only. On nine of the survey items, statistically significant differences were evidenced in the third week only and disappeared by the ninth week (see Table 4). The items were:

#23 The student teacher is having trouble matching his/her lessons with the time allotted.

#28 The student teacher deals appropriately with behavior problems.

29 The student teacher does a good job of motivating students.

35 The student teacher copes well with disruptive students.

#39 The student teacher is thorough in preparation for instruction.

#44 Sometimes I'm not sure the students are understanding the material the student teacher is teaching.

#45 The student teacher's transitions during instruction are efficient.

#48 The student teacher makes effective use of audiovisual materials that are available.

#51 The student teacher can manage several tasks simultaneously while he/she is teaching.

On all of these items, the cooperating teachers indicated a more favorable perception of student teacher performance than did the student teachers themselves. The potential for conflict on all of these items, therefore, was low. One might speculate as to the explanation for the consistency of this result, particularly when the literature informs us that beginning teachers tend not to have mastered these skills. It might be that cooperating teachers are inclined to be

positive and hopeful about their student teachers in the beginning of the semester, giving them the benefit of the doubt before they see much teaching done by the student teachers. Or it could be that the extra planning time available to student teachers at the beginning of the semester, when they are observing the cooperating teacher and not yet teaching full time, enables them to be very thorough in planning for their first few forays into teaching, yielding a good result. In any case, the threats to the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship are apparently lower at this point in the semester.

Both Weeks 3 and 9. On seven of the items, statistically significant differences were evidenced in the third week and continued into the ninth week (see Table 5). The data indicate that cooperating teachers' perceptions remained more favorable than student teachers' perceptions throughout the semester on four of the items:

#3 Sometimes the student teacher's lessons are boring.

#12 The student teacher needs to get students actively involved during lessons.

#32 The student teacher does not seem to be able to get enough time to plan adequately.

#42 The student teacher is having difficulty managing all the paperwork.

The potential for conflict on these four items was low throughout the semester.

However, on the following two items, cooperating teachers' perception of

performance was less favorable than that of the student teachers at both survey administration times:

#13 The student teacher's lesson plans include the elements of the Tennessee Instructional Model. [Author's note: The Tennessee instructional Model is a specific lesson plan format required by the state of Tennessee.]

#16 The student teacher cares about the students.

On these two items, therefore, there was a higher potential for conflict, and it was consistent throughout the semester. The difference evidenced on item 13 was unexpected. Perhaps student teachers were more conscious of the necessity to plan lessons according to the Tennessee Instructional Model (TIM), which is emphasized in methods courses in MTSU's program. Experienced teachers are certainly aware of the elements of TIM, but in the autonomy of the classroom they may be generally less concerned about it and fail to look for its components in the lessons they observe. On the other hand, the lessons taught by student teachers may be so inexpert that identifying the individual components of a lesson in relation to a specific teaching model may be difficult.

Item 16 should not be a surprise. Berliner (1986) found the area of emotional investment in their work to be a major difference between expert and novice teachers. According to Berliner, with teaching competence comes a difference in the level of emotionality expert teachers feel about the teaching task and about students. In addition, expert teachers feel a heightened sense of responsibility for student learning. In view of these findings in the literature, it should be expected that the

issue of caring about the students would be one of the areas of difference between cooperating teachers and student teachers.

The final item in this category is the only item in the study on which the differences between student teachers and cooperating teachers changed direction during the semester. The item was:

#53 The student teacher can predict ahead of time what parts of a lesson student swill have trouble understanding.

In the third week, cooperating teachers had a more favorable perception than did student teachers on this item; hence, the potential for conflict was low at that point in time. However, by the ninth week, cooperating teachers' perceptions had changed. One might assume that, by the time cooperating teachers had seen several weeks of full-time teaching by their student teachers, they had had multiple occasions to observe this common deficiency among beginners. The potential for conflict, therefore, had increased.

Week 9 Only. On seven of the items, statistically significant differences were not evidenced until the ninth week (see Table 6). This is the only category in which the majority of the differences revealed a high potential for conflict. On the following four items cooperating teachers had less favorable perceptions than student teachers about student teacher performance:

#2 The student teachers behaves in a professional manner.

#10 The student teacher has a compatible relationship with other co-workers in the school.

#11 The student teacher is having trouble with small group management during instruction.

#33 The student teacher is able to revise his/her lessons while teaching if they don't seem to be going well.

It is interesting to note that two of the four items (items 2 and 10) dealt with student teachers' behavior beyond teaching. The results on these two items were not expected. Item 2 is worded vaguely. "Behaves in a professional manner" could be defined as almost anything, a possible explanation for the difference that was evidenced. Item 10 refers to others in the school besides the cooperating teacher. Item 9 (see Appendix A), the survey item that specifically addresses the relationship between the student teacher and the cooperating teacher, did not reveal a significant difference. It is not known why the difference arose in regard to other workers in the school.

The other two negative items, 11 and 13, deal with instructional skills that often elude beginners. It is to be expected that experienced teachers saw these common deficiencies emerge as student teachers' teaching time increased over the course of the semester.

General Discussion. The results of the study bore out some of the novice-expert teacher research findings reported in the literature. It was expected, for example, that many of the statistically significant differences that emerged would be in the areas of instructional skills and classroom management.

It was not expected, however, that such a clear distinction in the *direction* of the differences in posing a potential for conflict would be evident between the

beginning and the end of the semester. Most of the statistically significant differences, for example, between the student teachers and the cooperating teachers in the first survey administration revealed a low potential for conflict. On all of the items that emerged at the end of the third week of student teaching but disappeared by the ninth week, and on most of the items that emerged in the third week and continued into the ninth week, the cooperating teachers felt more favorable about performance than did the student teachers themselves. Only among the differences that emerged for the first time at the end of the semester did a majority of the items pose a threat to the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship.

Implications of the Study

There are two implications of this study for the teacher education program at MTSU.

(1) We must make cooperating teachers aware that differences will arise between them and their student teachers in the way they interpret important aspects of teaching. Cooperating teachers should know that many of these differences are a natural function of being a beginner, rather than because the student teacher is incompetent or poorly prepared. Once cooperating teachers have an understanding of the unique characteristics of beginning teachers, they can make better informed decisions about how to help and coach their student teacher.

As a result of this study, we have incorporated information about novice-expert differences in the staff development sessions we provide to cooperating teachers.

(2) If, as Parkay (1988) postulates, the similarities in thinking between a

mentor and protege have an impact on the success of their relationship, then the findings of the study have ramifications for all those involved in the student teaching enterprise. The study results indicate that the differences that existed between cooperating teachers and student teachers at the beginning of student teaching were primarily favorable to the student teacher. Cooperating teachers seemed willing to give student teachers the benefit of the doubt that even student teachers were not willing to give themselves. However, as the student teaching semester progressed, and as cooperating teachers saw many examples of their student teachers' performance, assessment took a more realistic turn. By the end of student teaching, cooperating teachers were more critical of student teachers than were the student teachers themselves.

The less favorable differences can be problematic for the relationship between cooperating teachers and student teachers. When cooperating teachers differ significantly with their student teachers about how things are going, as long as their assessment is favorable, the danger these differences pose is small. However, when the differences are less favorable, the threats to the relationship between the two are real.

Teacher educators must be alert to the potential difficulties such differences may precipitate and be ready to deal with them constructively.

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Table 1
Item numbers and content of items on which mean differences (Teachers vs. Student Teachers) were found, Week 3 and/or Week 9

Item No.	Content
2	The student teacher behaves in a professional manner.
3	Sometimes the student teacher's lessons are boring.
10	The student teacher has a compatible relationship with other co-workers in the school.
11	The student teacher is having trouble with small group management during instruction.
12	The student teacher needs to get students more actively involved during lessons.
13	The student teacher's lesson plans include the elements of the Tennessee Instructional Model when appropriate.
16	The student teacher cares about the students.
21	The students complain about the work the student teacher gives them.
23	The student teacher is having trouble matching his/her lessons with the time allotted.
24	The student teacher tries to cover too much material too quickly.
28	The student teacher deals appropriately with behavior problems.
29	The student teacher does a good job of motivating students.
32	The student teacher does not seem to be able to get enough time to plan adequately.
33	The student teacher is able to revise his/her lessons while teaching if they don't seem to be going well.
35	The student teacher copes well with disruptive students.
39	The student teacher is thorough in preparation for instruction.
42	The student teacher is having difficulty managing all the paperwork.
44	Sometimes I'm not sure the students are understanding the material the student teacher is teaching.
45	The student teacher's transitions during instruction are efficient.
48	The student teacher makes effective use of audiovisual materials that are available.
49	Sometimes the student teacher's lessons get bogged down on one topic causing him/her to rush through he rest.
51	The student teacher can manage several tasks simultaneously while he/she is teaching.
53	The student teacher can predict ahead of time what parts of a lesson students will have trouble understanding.

Table 2
Items on which mean differences (Teachers v. Student Teachers) were found: Week 3
(Teacher N = 183 Student Teacher N= 191)

Item No.	Teacher Mean	Student Mean	F-ratio	p
3*	3.67	3.28	12.94	<.05
12*	3.39	3.06	7.91	<.01
13*	1.86	1.69	5.49	<.05
16*	1.45	1.22	22.04	<.01
23	3.67	3.38	6.50	<.05
28	2.10	2.27	3.95	<.05
29	2.03	2.26	8.28	<.05
32*	3.57	3.17	8.54	<.05
35	2.19	2.42	5.49	<.05
39	1.85	2.06	6.01	<.05
42*	3.63	3.32	6.62	<.05
44	3.28	3.03	4.28	<.05
45	2.13	2.41	10.58	<.01
48	1.78	2.18	10.28	<.01
51	2.22	2.45	4.68	<.05
53*	2.35	2.62	6.08	<.05

Significant differences were found on these items in Week 9 as well. They also appear in Table 3.

Table 3
Items on which mean differences (Teachers v. Student Teachers) were found: Week 9
(Teacher N= 140 Student Teacher N = 148)

Item No.	Teacher Mean	Student Mean	F-ratio	p
2	1.42	1.27	5.51	<.05
3*	3.69	3.44	4.24	<.05
10	1.60	1.42	4.57	<.05
11	3.83	4.06	4.02	<.05
12*	3.73	3.36	7.91	<.01
13*	1.80	1.59	6.80	<.01
16*	1.47	1.20	20.41	<.01
21	4.02	3.57	15.51	<.01
24	4.14	3.96	4.15	<.05
32*	3.99	3.63	7.32	<.01
33	2.04	1.77	8.79	<.01
42*	3.91	3.61	5.36	<.05
49	4.01	3.69	8.36	<.01
53*	2.45	2.23	4.22	<.05

Significant differences were found on these items in Week 3 as well. They also appear in Table 2.

Table 4

Week 3 only: potential for conflict on items with differences in Week 3 only

SA=1 SD=5

\- = potential for conflict is lower; teachers' perceptions more favorable than student teachers'

\+ = potential for conflict is higher; teachers' perceptions less favorable than student teachers'

Item No.	Item Content	Conflict Potential
23	The student teacher is having trouble matching his/her lessons with the time allotted. S mean = 3.38 T mean = 3.67 Teachers disagreed more	-
28	The student teacher deals appropriately with behavior problems. S mean = 2.27 T mean = 2.10 Teachers agreed more	-
29	The student teacher does a good job of motivating students. S mean = 2.26 T mean = 2.03 Teachers agreed more	-
35	The student teacher copes well with disruptive students. S mean = 2.42 T mean = 2.19 Teachers agreed more	-
39	The student teacher is thorough in preparation for instruction. S mean = 2.06 T mean = 1.85 Teachers agreed more	-
44	Sometimes I'm not sure the students are understanding the material the student teacher is teaching. S mean = 3.03 T mean = 3.28 Teachers disagreed more	-
45	The student teacher's transitions during instruction are efficient. S mean = 2.41 T mean = 2.13 Teachers agreed more	-

48 The student teacher makes effective use of audiovisual materials that are available. -

S mean = 2.18
T mean = 1.78
Teachers agreed more

51 The student teacher can manage several tasks simultaneously while he/she is teaching. -

S mean = 2.45
T mean = 2.22
Teacher agreed more

Table 5

Weeks 3 and 9: potential for conflict on items with differences in both Weeks 3 and 9

SA=1 SD=5

\- = potential for conflict is lower; teachers' perceptions more favorable than student teachers'

\+ = potential for conflict is higher; teachers' perceptions less favorable than student teachers'

Item No.	Item Content			Conflict Potential
3	Sometimes the student teacher's lessons are boring.			
	Week 3:	S mean = 3.28		-
		T mean = 3.67	Teachers disagreed more	
	Week 9:	S mean = 3.44		-
		T mean = 3.69	Teachers disagreed more	
12	The student teacher needs to get students more actively involved during lessons.			
	Week 3:	S mean = 3.06		-
		T mean = 3.39	Teachers disagreed more	
	Week 9:	S mean = 3.36		-
		T mean = 3.73	Teachers disagreed more	
13	The student teacher's lesson plans include the elements of the Tennessee Instructional Model when appropriate.			
	Week 3:	S mean = 1.69	Student teachers agreed more	+
		T mean = 1.86		
	Week 9:	S mean = 1.59	Student teachers agreed more	+
		T mean = 1.80		
16	The student teacher cares about the students.			
	Week 3:	S mean = 1.22	Student teachers agreed more	+
		T mean = 1.45		
	Week 9:	S mean = 1.20	Student teachers agreed more	+
		T mean = 1.47		
32	The student teacher does not seem to be able to get enough time to plan adequately.			
	Week 3:	S mean = 3.17		-
		T mean = 3.57	Teachers disagreed more	
	Week 9:	S mean = 3.63		-
		T mean = 3.99	Teachers disagreed more	
42	The student teacher is having difficulty managing all the paperwork.			
	Week 3:	S mean = 3.32		-
		T mean = 3.63	Teachers disagreed more	
	Week 9:	S mean = 3.61		-
		T mean = 3.91	Teachers disagreed more	

53 The student teacher can predict ahead of time what parts of a lesson students will have trouble understanding.

Week 3:	S mean = 2.62		-
	T mean = 2.35	Teachers agreed more	
Week 9:	S mean = 2.23	Student teachers agreed more	+
	T mean = 2.45		

Table 6

Week 9 only: potential for conflict on items with differences in Week 9 only

SA=1 SD=5

- = potential for conflict is lower; teachers' perceptions more favorable than student teachers'

+ = potential for conflict is higher; teachers' perceptions less favorable than student teachers'

Item No.	Item Content	Conflict Potential
2	The student teacher behaves in a professional manner. S mean = 1.27 T mean = 1.42 Student teachers agreed more	+
10	The student teacher has a compatible relationship with other co-workers in the school. S mean = 1.42 T mean = 1.60 Student teachers agreed more	+
11	The student teacher is having trouble with small group management during instruction. S mean = 4.06 T mean = 3.83 Student teachers disagreed more	+
21	The students complain about the work the student teacher gives them. S mean = 3.57 T mean = 4.02 Teachers disagreed more	-
24	The student teacher tries to cover too much material too quickly. S mean = 3.96 T mean = 4.14 Teachers disagreed more	-
33	The student teacher is able to revise his/her lessons while teaching if they don't seem to be going well. S mean = 1.77 T mean = 2.04 Student teachers agreed more	+
49	Sometimes the student teacher's lessons get bogged down on one topic causing him/her to rush through the rest. S mean = 3.69 T mean = 4.01 Teachers disagreed more	-